

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 26<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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### **HOUSE/SENATE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE DROPS HOSPITAL WAGE RATE PROVISION FROM BILL**

#### ***HINCHEY VOWS TO KEEP WORKING ON REGIONAL SOLUTION***

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today learned that a legislative rider that would have reclassified hospitals in Orange and Dutchess counties into the New York City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has been removed from an appropriations bill. The Senate conferees agreed to drop the hospitals' provision at a meeting of the House-Senate conference committee today. Hinchey had worked for the hospital provision's inclusion and its expansion to include hospitals in Ulster and Sullivan counties.

"Cuts in Medicare reimbursements have caused the hospitals in our region to struggle financially," said Hinchey. "I have been working with my colleagues for three years to try to increase the reimbursement rates for the hospitals in all four counties. Trying to accomplish this in an appropriations bill is very unorthodox since Medicare issues fall under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee. Nevertheless, since the rider created an opening, I worked very hard to try to keep it in the bill in a way that would have benefited the hospitals in all four counties and not pitted hospitals against each other.

"We knew all along it would be an uphill battle. Congressional leaders are very sensitive to matters of jurisdictional protocol. Now that it's over, I intend to go back to working with my Hudson Valley colleagues and our two senators on a provision that benefits all of the hospitals in the region when Congress considers Medicare reform legislation."

The rider that would have reclassified hospitals in Dutchess and Orange counties into the New York MSA was attached to the House version of the 2002 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, which would provide for emergency military funding and New York City disaster recovery efforts. This reclassification would have allowed hospitals in those counties to pay its workers higher wages. By the same token it would have put hospitals in Ulster and Sullivan counties at a severe disadvantage in trying to attract workers. The provision was not included in the Senate's version of the bill, so a joint House-Senate conference committee was charged with negotiating a final agreement.

Negotiators for the Republican House leadership receded to the Senate position last night. An attempt by Senate supporters of the hospital provision to reinstate it in the conference report failed after Senate leaders expressed strong opposition. The committee met this morning and completed its work on the conference report, which will now be considered by both chambers of Congress for final passage.